

The following statement was given by William Blum, a panel member at the Teach-In entitled "Understanding the Attack on America: an Alternative View," held at the UNC-Chapel Hill campus on Sept. 17, 2001. Blum is author of Killing Hope: US Military and CIA Interventions Since World War II and Rogue State: A Guide to the World's Only Superpower. Portions of these books can be read at <http://members.aol.com/superogue/homepage.htm> (with a link to Killing Hope).

A few days ago in Washington, where I live, I happened to catch a program on NPR on which a well-known pacifist somehow managed to sneak in as a guest along with two people from establishment-type think tanks. The pacifist mentioned that the US is the most violent country in the world and that we shouldn't be too surprised that some of our victims might want to retaliate.

I could scarcely believe my ears that I was hearing this on NPR (which I don't distinguish from CBS or NBC politically -- I hope I don't offend anyone by saying that.). After these remarks of the pacifist, the host of the program made no direct reply to him. He just proceeded to ask the other guests about something else. And neither of the think tank guys responded at all to what had been said. And that was that.

After almost a week now of radio, TV, and newspaper stories about the terrible events of last Tuesday, the one thing most missing, in my observation, is the great paucity of soul searching on the part of the media and the American people, as to Why are there all these people out there who hate America enough to do what they did? A sentence here or a sentence there hinting at the question is what I've picked up, or the words of one or two individuals in the Third World shown venting their anger. I haven't seen a single article in the WP or heard a sustained discussion on radio or TV on the subject. It's quite possible there has been something of the sort, but in that case I'd like to know if the voice of unconventional wisdom was included in the discussion.

The question has been dealt with in passing remarks, like, Well, they can't stand our freedom and democracy, they attack us because we're the biggest and the best, or simply because they're evil or crazy.

The Wash Post has a kids' page each day, and the day after the attacks last week there was a section on this page called "Why?" "Why," it asked, "do some people hate the United States?" The answer given was: "The United States is the most powerful country in the world and there will always be people who disagree with things the US government does."

This is how one talks to a child, isn't it? But, it sure sounds very much like the way the government and media often talk to adults.

In 1998, after the bombing of two US embassies in Africa, Richard Haass of the Brookings Institution, who's now a high official in the SD, was asked "What is it that these terrorists want from the United States?" Haass replied: "Well, the answer is it's not anything we're simply doing. It is who we are. It's the fact that we're the most powerful country in the world. It's the fact that we're a secular country. ... It is simply who we are and it is our existence that really bothers them."

At the same time, Pres. Clinton stated: ""Americans are targets of terrorism, in part, because we act to advance peace and democracy and because we stand united against terrorism."

And last week, Defense Sec Rumsfeld said they attacked us because the US is a "beacon of freedom".

This is "denial" written large. And along with denial, we have hypocrisy. Sec of State Colin Powell last week condemned "people who feel that with the destruction of buildings, with the murder of people, they can somehow achieve a political purpose."

Does that not precisely describe what the US did 2 years ago when it bombed Yugoslavia for 78 days and nights? And is this not the same Colin Powell who directed the horrific bombings of Panama and Iraq? Do our leaders think that no one has any memory? Or do they simply not care what people think?

More hypocrisy. Pres. Bush and other officials have emphasized that it's not only terrorists that the US is going to be waging war against, it's any nation which harbors terrorists.

Well, there are few, if any, nations that have harbored more terrorists than the United States. As one example, the anti-Castro Cubans in Miami, who have carried out hundreds, if not thousands of terrorist acts, in the US, in Cuba, and elsewhere; all kinds of murders and bombings. They have been harbored here in safety for decades. As have numerous other terrorists, torturers and human rights violators from Latin America, Indonesia and elsewhere. So when Bush speaks of waging war against nations which harbor terrorists, is he planning to attack the United States?

Of course it's not America the terrorists hate; it's American foreign policy. It's what the United States has done to the world in the past half century --all the violence, the bombings, the depleted uranium, the cluster bombs, the assassinations, the promotion of torture. The scorecard reads as follows: From 1945 to the end of the century, the United States attempted to overthrow more than 40 foreign governments, and to crush more than 30 populist-nationalist movements fighting against intolerable regimes. In the process, the US has bombed 25 countries, caused the end of life for several million people, and condemned many millions more to a life of agony and despair.

A decade after the fall of the Berlin Wall, America is still intervening in every corner of the world, often in a bloody manner. And any day now, our leaders will be on the warpath once again, bombing for freedom, killing for peace.

If last week's terrorists are indeed from the Middle East, no one need wonder about their possible motivations or the motivations of other Middle East terrorists acting against the US over the years. Consider these actions of American foreign policy during the last 20 years:

The shooting down of two Libyan planes in 1981; the bombardment of Beirut in 1983 and 1984; the bombing of Libya in 1986; the bombing and sinking of an Iranian ship in 1987; the shooting down of an Iranian passenger plane in 1988; the shooting down of two more Libyan planes in 1989; the massive bombing of the Iraqi people in 1991; the continuing bombings and sanctions against Iraq (including the day before last week's disaster here); the bombing of Sudan and Afghanistan in 1998; the habitual support of Israel despite the devastation and routine torture

inflicted upon the Palestinian people; the condemnation of Palestinian resistance to this; the abduction of wanted men from Muslim countries, such as Malaysia, Pakistan, Lebanon and Albania; the large military and hi-tech presence in Islam's holiest land, Saudi Arabia, and elsewhere in the Persian Gulf region ...

These are some of the American actions that can turn an Arab or a Muslim into a fanatic, into a terrorist, into a decrier of "America, the Great Satan", and the terrorist attacks against the US are never going to end until we stop intervening in civil wars and other matters which are none of our business except that they serve some corporate interest. The attacks are not going to end until we stop bombing innocent people and destroying grand old cities. They're not going to end until we stop supporting gross violators of human rights who oppress their people, until we stop doing a whole host of terrible things.

If I were the president, I could stop terrorist attacks against the United States in a few days. Permanently. I would first apologize to all the widows and orphans, the tortured and impoverished, and all the many millions of other victims of American imperialism. Then I would announce that America's global interventions have come to an end. I would then reduce the military budget by at least 90% and use the savings to pay reparations to the victims. There would be enough money. Do you know what one year's military budget of 300+ billion dollars is equal to? It's equal to more than \$17,000 an hour for every hour since Jesus Christ was born.

What have the American interventions had in common? And I'm speaking of hundreds of separate American interventions into sovereign nations. The engine of American foreign policy has clearly not been fueled by a devotion to any kind of morality, nor even simple decency, I'm sorry to say, but rather by the necessity to serve other masters, which I've broken down to four imperatives:

- 1) making the world open and hospitable to American transnational corporations;
- 2) enhancing the financial statements of defense companies at home who have donated generously to members of Congress and residents of the White House;
- 3) preventing the rise of any society that might serve as a successful example of an alternative to the capitalist model;
- 4) extending American hegemony over as much of the globe as possible, to prevent the rise of any regional power that might challenge American supremacy, and to create a world order in America's image, as befits the world's only superpower.

It's not just people in the Middle East who have good reason for hating what our government does; we've created huge numbers of potential terrorists all over Latin America during a half century of American actions far worse than what we've done in the Middle East. I think that if Latin Americans shared the belief of many Muslims that they will go directly to heaven for giving up their life and acting as a martyr against the great enemy, by now we would have had decades of repeated terrorist horror coming from south of the border.

There's also the people of Asia and Africa.

I've documented almost all of America's global crimes in my books. I mention that not as a plug, but so you'll know that I'm speaking of reality.

It would have been a great surprise if Osama bin Laden had not been named as the chief suspect of what happened last week. He is the quintessential "usual suspect". I'm waiting now for him to be accused of the assassination of JFK, if not of Lincoln. Michael Moore the film maker has wondered how this highly sophisticated operation -- involving perhaps dozens of operatives in the air and on the ground, 4 airplane hijackings from 3 different airports, with all the skilled pilots needed -- Michael wonders how this was all masterminded by a man living in a tent in the mountains of Afghanistan. But if Osama bin Laden was indeed the person behind the attacks -- and I'm not suggesting he wasn't; I just don't know and I'm not sure the US government knows -- then we must remember he is also a product of US foreign policy.

We have heard a lot in the media in recent years about the cruelty and backwardness of the Taliban in Afghanistan. The media has told us repeatedly about the total oppression of females, the prohibition of music, dance, or any religion other than Islam, about public hangings, and many more horror stories. What we're almost never told or reminded of is the fact that neither the Taliban nor any other Islamic fundamentalist group would be in power in Afghanistan if not for US foreign policy.

Back in 1979, Afghanistan had a government which, although Muslim, was intent upon land reform, separation of church and state, increasing the public sector, eradicating illiteracy, legalization of unions, the emancipation of women in a land almost entirely Muslim, and pushing Afghanistan into the 20th century. Washington, in its infinite wisdom, decided to overthrow this government. Why? Because it was supported by its neighbor, the Soviet Union. That was the only reason.

The CIA began to covertly aid the Moujahedeen, which means "holy warriors", who were opposed to the government. Osama bin Laden was one of the moujahedeen. Zbigniew Brzezinski, who was Jimmy Carter's National Security Advisor at the time, later admitted that this policy of aiding the Moujahedeen was explicitly instituted six months before the Soviet invasion with the expectation that it would induce the Russians to invade and hopefully they would wind up suffering their own Vietnam War.

After the Soviet invasion, the CIA became the grand coordinator of the holy war against the government, putting together an army of moujahedeen from many Muslim countries, arming them, training them, raising the financing for the operation, and much more.

And it worked. Oh how it worked. The result, a decade later, was that the United States and the fundamentalists "won", and the women, and the rest of Afghanistan, lost. More than a million dead, three million disabled, five million refugees; in total about half the population.

Jimmy Carter, as far as I know, has never expressed any reservations for permitting Brzezinski to institute this policy. But Carter was later to state: "We have only to go to Lebanon, to Syria, to Jordan, to witness firsthand the intense hatred among many people for the United States, because we bombed and shelled and unmercifully killed totally innocent villagers, women and children and farmers and housewives, in those villages around Beirut...as a result, we have become a kind

of Satan in the minds of those who are deeply resentful. That is what precipitated the taking of hostages and that is what has precipitated some terrorist attacks."

Some of the things I've said here today are very difficult to say to American audiences. It's like telling a man that the woman he's lived with for the past 20 years is actually a man. Americans sincerely believe that their leaders always mean well, even if the result turns out badly, and if they didn't mean well the public would know about it. Either Dan Rather or Ted Koppel or some other reliable talking head would have clued us in by now.

But the fact is the government lies to us. I hope I haven't shocked any of you by saying that. And there's nothing they lie about more than motivation, by which I mean the real reason behind their policies, and particularly with regard to foreign policy, where it's much easier to cover up a lie.

We were told that the US/NATO bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999 was to save the people of Kosovo from ethnic cleansing by the Serbs. And since the ethnic cleansing finally came to an end, the bombing seems to have worked. Right? First there was the ethnic cleansing, then came the bombing, then came the end of the ethnic cleansing. What could be simpler? I'm sure that about 90% of those Americans who think about such things firmly believe that, including most of you.

But it was all a lie. The bombing didn't end the ethnic cleansing. The bombing caused the ethnic cleansing. The systematic forced deportations of large numbers of Kosovars -- what we call ethnic cleansing -- did not begin until about two days after the bombing began, and was clearly a reaction to it by the Serb forces, born of great anger and feelings of powerlessness. This is easily verified by looking at a daily newspaper for the few days before the bombing began the night of March 23/24, and the few days after. Or simply look at the New York Times of March 26, page 1, which reads:

with the NATO bombing already begun, a deepening sense of fear took hold in Pristina [the main city of Kosovo] that the Serbs would NOW vent their rage against ethnic Albanian civilians in retaliation. [emphasis added]

The next day, March 27, we find the first reference to a "forced march" or anything of that sort.

How is it possible that such a powerful lie could be told to the American people and that the people would swallow it without gagging?

There's the story from the Cold War about a group of Russian writers touring the United States. They were astonished to find, after reading the newspapers and watching television, that almost all the opinions on all the vital issues were the same. "In our country," said one of them, "to get that result we have a dictatorship. We imprison people. We tear out their fingernails. Here you have none of that. How do you do it? What's the secret?"

The secret is a form of censorship, often self-censorship, more insidious than a totalitarian state could ever hope to achieve. Take the Washington Post, which I read every day. I would never apply for a job as a writer there because I know I couldn't say the kinds of things I've said here tonight; they never even print my letters, not one of dozens I've sent in during more than six

years. And the Post would never hire me, for similar political reasons. The Post, like the rest of the mass media, hires only true believers and the result is obvious in what you read -- a range of ideology ranging from the very conservative on the right to just slightly to the left of center, which we call liberal. The views of radicals or leftists or progressives -- whatever you want to call them -- are almost entirely shut out in the mass media.

Can any of you name a single American daily newspaper that unequivocally opposed the US-NATO bombing of Yugoslavia two years ago?

Can any of you name a single American daily newspaper that unequivocally opposed the US bombing of Iraq ten years ago?

Isn't that remarkable? In a supposedly free society, with a supposedly free press, the odds should be way against that being the case. But that's the way it is.

Keep in mind that liberal and conservative are NOT polar opposites. There's an other world to the left of liberals which is much more the polar opposite of the conservatives.

Remember also that in their last debate last year, dealing with foreign policy, Bush and Gore were virtual clones. Foreign policy is sacrosanct. On Friday, the two houses of Congress passed the "Authorization for use of Military Force", with only one dissenting vote in total.

It's ironic, but the far right in the United States is more open to believing the worst about American foreign policy than are most liberals. This may be because those on the far right, being extremists themselves, do not instinctively shy away from believing that the government is capable of extreme behavior, at home or abroad. The radical left and right share a profound cynicism about their government's very intentions. But those in between the two poles do not naturally come by such views.

To many of those bunched around the center, the statements made here about the United States not meaning well in its foreign policy may sound like an example of that frequent object of ridicule, the "conspiracy theory". But you know, you can say that teachers organize to pursue their own interests by forming unions, and you can say that farmers organize to pursue their own interests, but the minute you imply that people of power and wealth organize to pursue their own interests, you're called a conspiracy theorist, or conspiracy nut.

Remember two of the laws of politics which came out of the Watergate scandal of the 1970s:

The First Watergate Law of American Politics states: "No matter how paranoid you are, what the government is actually doing is worse than you imagine."

The Second Watergate Law states: "Don't believe anything until it's been officially denied."

Both laws are still on the books.